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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LIMA 002840

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [MARR](#) [PE](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: THE "U.S. DESIGNS ON THE AMAZON" MYTH RESURFACES
IN PERU

REF: A. USDAO LIMA 2808

[1](#)B. 04 LIMA 5696

Classified By: Ambassador Curtis Struble for Reason 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. The Ambassador and a USDAO member have confronted Peruvian officials concerning a Peruvian Army officer's briefing at a bilateral intelligence conference in Quito that depicted the U.S. as the principal security threat to Peru, and alleged that the U.S. had plans to take over the Amazon Basin. The Peruvian Army's Director of Intelligence apologized for his subordinate's presentation, which he said did not reflect the views of the Peruvian Army. The Foreign Ministry's Director of Security Issues responded that in Peru's interagency National Security Council there had never been even a hint that the U.S. was a potential threat. He added, however, that a number of military officers had asked him whether there was substance to the misinformation about U.S. designs on the Amazon. Defense Minister Chiabra told the Ambassador that this negative view of the U.S. was totally contrary to official institutional policy, but he acknowledged that there was a paranoid viewpoint among some officers. Chiabra said he would use military instruction and other official channels to combat this disinformation. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) Ref A reports on a USDAO member's meeting with the Peruvian Army's Director of Intelligence, Brigadier General Pedro Beingolea Gutierrez, regarding a briefing given by one of Beingolea's subordinates, Colonel Victor Tenorio, at a bilateral intelligence conference in Quito. Information had become available to U.S. authorities indicating that Tenorio's briefing: depicted the United States as the principal external security threat to Peru; alleged that the U.S. had plans in place to take over and internationalize the Amazon Basin; and claimed that the U.S. intended to convert the armed forces of the region into police-like entities that would be incapable of resisting U.S. aggression. Per Ref A, BG Beingolea had been unaware of the content of the briefing given by Col. Tenorio, but apologized profusely after confirming the information presented by the DAO member, indicating that the briefing did not reflect the position of the Peruvian Army.

[1](#)3. (S) The Ambassador discussed this incident on 6/22 with Foreign Ministry Director of Security and Defense Issues Daul Matute. Matute said that as Security Director, he sat on the interagency board that assessed potential threats to Peru's sovereignty, and said there had never been even a whisper in that body that the U.S. was a potential threat. He added, however, that a number of military officers had asked him at different times about the claim that a U.S. textbook outlines a plan to seize control of the Amazon on behalf of the USG, so he knew that this bit of misinformation had some currency. He had repeatedly explained, he said, that the text story is fraudulent and was concocted by someone in Brazil. He spoke of his own desire to promote a richer exchange between the U.S. and Peruvian militaries, and regretted that Article 98 restrictions have complicated this.

[1](#)4. (S) At a 6/23 meeting, the Ambassador raised the issue with DefMin Chiabra. The Ambassador said he had initially assumed that such a briefing could not have been given to another government unless it reflected an approved Army position. The Ambassador accepted the apology and assurances General Beingolea gave to USDAO, but nonetheless wished to bring the matter to Chiabra's attention. This theory of U.S. designs on the Amazon was born about 40 years ago in a Brazilian war college. Considering the premise laughable, the U.S. did not act to counter it. Over time the theory became entrenched. The Ambassador gave Chiabra a copy taken from the internet of the fake "textbook" map of a U.S.-dominated Amazon Basin, and of the Brazilian Embassy in Washington's acknowledgment that it was a forgery, to illustrate the sort of misinformation going around.

[1](#)5. (S) Chiabra thanked the Ambassador for handling the issue by coming to him personally and quietly in this way. He noted that the Defense Ministry had set up an interagency National Security Council to review threats, and had published a White Paper on Defense towards the same end. Those processes, which did not reflect a U.S. threat, represented the institution's views, not Col. Tenorio's briefing. Chiabra said it was worrisome to imagine colonels

having the prerogative of making their own policies; hypothetically, a briefing could assert a territorial or maritime boundary claim contrary to GOP policy.

16. (S) Leaving aside the specific instance, Chiabra agreed that MinDef needed to make a low-key ("suave") effort to deal with what he acknowledged was a problematic viewpoint among some elements of the armed forces. Chiabra said that a confluence of events -- the arrest of several senior generals, the drastic cutbacks in military budgets, Article 98-mandated cutbacks in U.S. assistance/engagement, a conspiracy theory book floating around and the disinformation about U.S. designs on the Amazon -- were feeding a paranoid train of thought among some officers. Chiabra said that he would discuss this issue with the Joint Command and the Service Chiefs. They needed to keep an eye on military instruction and otherwise make enhanced low-key efforts to combat this disinformation. (NOTE: Per Ref B, the "conspiracy theory book" may be an allusion to Peruvian investigative journalist Ricardo Uceda's "Death in the Little Pentagon," which detailed alleged systematic, extra-judicial elimination of 300 subversives by Peruvian Army Intelligence during the 80s and 90s. END NOTE.)

17. (S) COMMENT. The theory that the U.S is behind a covert plot to seize the Amazon Basin is a hydra-like myth that keeps coming back no matter how often it's quashed, especially now with internet diffusion at the push of a button. The disturbing element here is the ease and temerity with which so patently false a supposition was aired in an international forum. The incident highlights the need to work with our GOP contacts to convey the message at all levels that the U.S. seeks to work with Peru in partnership, not as adversaries. END COMMENT.
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